

Dear Education Committee:

This is my written testimony as I will not be present to testify at the hearing. I am an Orton-Gillingham-Associate level practitioner, a reading specialist with my 102 and 097 certifications, and a special educator currently working at a middle school in the state of CT. As such, I am well aware that Senate Bill 317 as it is currently worded is NOT comprehensive enough to provide the needed supports for students with dyslexia.

I support Bill 317-An Act Concerning Dyslexia-WITH AMMENDMENTS; and respectfully request it to specify that candidates seeking a remedial reading endorsement complete a graduate level program aligned with evidence-based practices and the IDA Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.

The hard working teachers who are tasked with evaluating the needs of dyslexic students are simply not equipped to understand their needs and the interventions that would produce the greatest gains.

I know this because I have personally met with many parents (with the majority having unidentified dyslexic children) from various districts across the state who have crossed my path seeking help. These parents, whose children range from kindergarten to grade 7, have fought tirelessly advocating for their children all the while feeling frustrated and defeated by the status quo. You can change these dynamics by passing a bill that would force teachers to receive comprehensive teacher training from accredited graduate programs.

Over the course of 24 years, I've worked closely with dyslexic students in six states, receiving my 102 and 097 certificates from Southern Connecticut State University in 2006. Even with my vast experience, years of graduate studies, and the ease at which testing and analyzing student data comes naturally to me; I instinctively knew that I needed training using an Orton-Gillingham approach to reading that was not provided in my college level degree choices at the time.

Research in the field, and my own experience over the years has proven that an Orton-Gillingham approach to reading is highly effective with a dyslexic population. Fortunately, my school district recognized the importance of this knowledge and financially supported the cost for my training. I am just one educator in a sea of educators that work with dyslexic students each and every day, many of whom are not adequately trained to evaluate and accommodate the needs of this population.

A single course as currently written in this bill is not comprehensive enough for staff to effectively work with dyslexics. Courses must be carefully aligned with 102 certifications, and comprehensively use effective evidence-based curriculum. Schools all over the state do not have staff versed enough to recognize dyslexia, administer comprehensive testing to determine dyslexia, and then target this population with effective Orton-Gillingham research-based instruction.

Research has proven that one in five students have some degree of dyslexia. Many are not being identified and certainly not receiving effective research-based interventions from a qualified instructor. These children continue to struggle with increasing text demands, without the tools and accommodations to be successful.

The time to act is NOW! Don't let another year go by before our dyslexic children are comprehensively evaluated and provided with appropriate effective research-based instruction they desperately need to address their reading deficits. You have the power now to make a positive difference in the lives of thousands of dyslexic students across our state.

Respectfully Submitted,

C. Melinda Desposito
Associate Level Orton-Gillingham Practitioner
Reading Consultant/Specialist/Special Educator
Bethel, CT